BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Katsuro Miho

Katsuro Miho was born in 1912. A 1931 Maui High School graduate, Miho continued his education at the University of Utah and George Washington University, where he received his law degree in 1938.

After finishing law school he worked as a law clerk for Ingram Stainback. In the early 1940s he opened a private practice with Hiram Fong. The firm was later called Fong, Miho, Choy and Robinson.

Miho was a member of the Statehood Commission. In 1952, Mayor John Wilson appointed Miho to the city planning commission.

In 1971, he was appointed to a federal judgeship for Wake Island.

Katsuro Miho passed away in January 1995.

Tape Nos. 17-38-1-89 and 17-39-1-89

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Katsuro Miho (KM)

November 16, 1989

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

Joy Chong: The following is videotape number one of interview with Katsuro Miho. It took place on November 16, 1989. The interviewers were Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

WN: Okay.

MK: This is videotape number one, interview with Mr. Katsuro Miho.

KM: Uh huh.

MK: Well, Mr. Miho, why don't we start with your parents' background. Who were they, and how did they end up in Hawai'i?

KM: Well, my father [Katsuichi] and mother [Ayano] were Japanese-language, professional language school teachers in (Hiroshima,) Japan. And even in Japan, in those days, the teaching profession, to get to become qualified, was not easy. They got their certificate, and their first job was at the village where my grandfather more or less was a village boss. And they fell in love, you know. And the maid found the love letter, what they call, Japanese call *fumi*. And the whole house was in an uproar because my mother was the only daughter, and he had no sons, my grandfather. And he was looking for a son to adopt to carry on the family name. And he says, "Oh, check up on this fellow, Katsuichi." So they checked him up and checked him up. And the more they checked on him, the more he fell in love with my father. And he decided to adopt him as a Miho, into the Miho family on one condition that he be made principal of a new school which the village was trying to build for long time. I'm getting off the subject, but anyway, long story short, my grandfather started a movement to build a new school, grammar school, and on this (basis) my father became the first principal. And his picture in the school is still there, as the first principal (in Kusuna, Hiroshima). And then he got married, and then he had one son [Katsuto] and one daughter [Hisae]. They had, I mean.

And in those days, [18]87, '88, my village of Fuchizaki in Hiroshima[-*ken*], there was a great movement to send immigrants to Hawai'i and California. There was a movement. But they needed especially schoolteachers, qualified schoolteachers. And so my parents wanted to come

to Hawai'i. My father didn't (like the status of an) adopted son, although he used the name Miho. And so he applied to come to Hawai'i. And my grandfather heard about it, and he said, "You can go for one year, but provided you leave your son with me to carry on the Miho name," and so forth. And so, on that commission, for one year, they came to Hawai'i. [KM's parents left Katsuto and Hisae in Japan, and brought their second daughter Tsukie to Hawai'i.] When they came to Hawai'i, I was born [on August 10, 1912]. So they couldn't move right away. It was a good excuse, you know. And after me, another sister was born, Fumiye, and then another (son, Katsuso) was born. Six Miho children were born in Hawai'i. [Tsukie was born in Japan and the other five children (Katsuro, Fumiye, Katsuso, Katsuaki and Katsugo) were born in Hawai'i.] They couldn't leave at all. They couldn't go back to Hiroshima, see. And so my parents were stuck, and my grandfather just gave up. (MK chuckles.) That's how they came to Hawai'i.

MK: And where did . . .

KM: And he became the first Japanese school principal of the Buddhist Japanese-language school in Wailuku, Maui, near Happy Valley where Jesse Kuhaulua, Takamiyama [the first American to compete professionally in Japan's national sumo tournaments] was born and raised. And from Wailuku, they stayed two or three years there. And they went to Waikapū, as schoolteachers, and from Waikapū to Keāhua, and from Keāhua to Honolulu for one year, and so on and so forth. In fact, I started my first grammar school education in Honolulu. We lived in Mō'ili'ili, those days for about one year. And I still remember the room number, the name of my grammar school teacher because she was so nice to us. Her name was Miss Snow. Snow. And her hair was white, too. She was really platinum blonde, I guess. Miss Snow. And she named my oldest sister Tsukie, Rosaline, which my parents didn't like for a long time until she grew up. From Honolulu and back to Maui, went to Keāhua again. And from there, we went to Kahului. And I went, I got a scholarship and went to University of Utah.

MK: You know when your parents and your family was living in Kahului, Maui, did your father get into other types of business there?

KM: Yes, uh huh. My father started the first in Hawai'i, the first savings and loan company. He and Kurokawa-*sensei* [Tetsuji Kurokawa], later Kaimukī Japanese School principal, started a Maui Chochiku Gaisha, Maui Savings and Loan Company, which went broke, too, by the way. [Another source notes that the earliest savings and loan association was Pioneer Building and Loan Association, chartered in 1890.] (KM greets someone.) And from Maui, I went to Utah.

MK: And when we interviewed "Kats" [Katsugo Miho] this morning, he was saying that your parents became the owners of a hotel.

KM: Yes, in Kahului. Kahului Hotel, [later known as] Miho Hotel. Yeah.

MK: And back in those days, since your father was a schoolteacher and also owner of a hotel, to what extent was he active in community affairs?

KM: Oh, he was always very active. Very active, sticking his nose into something, to things that (chuckles) he wasn't welcomed, either. But he was a man of strong opinion and convictions. And he did not hesitate to say what he wanted to say. And so he's always getting into

controversies. But he had his say, which was always sincere, yeah.

MK: As your father, did he ever encourage you to get involved in community affairs or politics?

KM: No, not especially at all, no. Only, I remember one thing in those days, talking about community affairs. I entered the first [*The*] *American Boy* magazine-sponsored model airplane contest. (Phone rings.) This was the year after [Charles] Lindbergh flew to Paris, 1928. And I won the inter-island championship, you know, became representative of Hawai'i to go to Detroit, Detroit national contest. And . . .

MK: Wait now, Mr. Miho, wait, we're going to . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: We can continue with [*The*] *American Boy* magazine.

KM: I represented Hawai'i at this contest of 500 American boys from all over America in 1928 [the number of participants could not be confirmed]. And it was in Detroit. And when I won the championship in Hawai'i, my father—talk about community service—my father said, "Everybody was up in arms, so happy," and congratulating me, coming up the house, and start telephoning and so forth, making presents, Japanese-style. And, oh, they thought I had won the world or something. Well, was quite an event, I suppose. And was free trip to Detroit, Michigan. All the way, those days by ship, you know. And to represent all the young people of Hawai'i. Actually, to represent Hawai'i. And my father said one thing to me. "Young man, sit down. There's only one thing I want to say to you that I hope you will not forget. You won something very important and very significant. But don't let this go to your head, and don't let your nose go too high." (Chuckles) I really was not up there, anyway.

(Chuckles)

KM: "No, I won't." Real Japanese-style, you know. Yeah. He was an educator, all right.

WN: Did you help at all in your family hotel?

KM: No, he wouldn't let me. The only thing I did was to drive customers around. Yeah. He did not want—well, I don't know how or what you say, but in my family, in those days, all Japanese families, I guess, the oldest son was a privileged character, you know. He had the best food in the family. If there were only one *kūmū*, he will get the *kūmū*, you know. And so on and so forth. He would get the best clothes. And he was treated as a sort of a special person. Because in Japan, he was supposed to carry on the family tradition, family name. And that carried over to Hawai'i. And so I don't know if my little brothers and sister agrees to this, but I remember as a child, I was more or less a privileged character in my family. [KM, although not first in birth order, was accorded the privileges of a first-born son because Katsuto, his elder brother, was not with the family in Hawai'i.]

WN: Did your father expect you or want you, eventually, maybe, take over the business?

KM: No, he never wanted, he never himself wanted to be a businessman. He thought business was below his human dignity to make money, to go after money, which he never said so in so

many words, but I know that's what he had in mind. It's sort of a Confucian, I suppose influence, but making money had its place. But not as cultural thing. Yeah.

WN: Did he ever tell you why he got into a hotel business in the first place?

KM: He had to, economically. With kids growing up and needing education and so forth. He had to get (some kind of) income. And so my mother insisted that we buy this hotel and get some economic advancement, which she was right. My father never paid much attention to business. He thought check writing was inexhaustible. I still remember my family, my oldest sister and my mother raising hell with him because he'd write blank—he'd write checks when there was no money to cover it. And he said, "Oh, people will trust my signature." (Chuckles)

And when I came back from law school, and my first year as a lawyer, full-fledged lawyer in Honolulu, I remember one of my neighbors, he [(Robert S. Toda) of Toda Drug Co.] was quite a wealthy man in those days. Flew over to Honolulu to congratulate me and so on and so forth, give me a little present, and flew back to Maui. And I wrote him a little check. I said, "Mr. Toda, thank you so much for all the past years' help to my family." Because when the war came and my father was interned, I was checking up all the [family's account] books on Maui, and discovered this one, several of many checks which we covered and paid up. But one check was to Mr. Toda. And this check was a sizable one, those days, and I checked in the old checkbook. There was no reference that it has ever been paid. So I figured, "Oh, he had never been paid," which was true. Mr. Toda never cashed it because he knew Mother needed it for our education, for our family needs. He never cashed it.

So I wrote a new check, plus interest. In fact, this story came out in one of the Japanese newspapers at one time because Mr. Toda had told him [a reporter] about it. And I added the interest at so much, which came out to so many hundred dollars and mailed it to him without a thank you note. And Mr. Toda flew back. Flew over to—he's dead and gone now— but he flew out to Honolulu, and in front of me, he just bawled me out. He said, "Katsuro-*san*, I did not give that check to your mother for money-making purposes. I gave that check to your mother to borrow, whatever she needed at the bank." (Bishop Bank) I think, had a branch there. "What do you mean by insulting me after all these years by putting in a little interest in the thing." And he tore it up, right in front me, he tore it up, so many pieces. And, "Never do this again," he says. "If I had made the check out for interest-bearing purposes or for making money, I wouldn't have made the check that way. So remember that." I sure appreciate it. But the Japanese were that way, in those days. They carried on—what do you call—*giri-ninjō*. They are what you call—what do you say in English, *giri-ninjō?*

MK: Obligation.

KM: Human obligations.

MK: Yeah, human compassion? *Ninjō?*

KM: Compassion, yeah.

MK: So you grew up with those type of Japanese values, then?

KM: Oh yeah.

MK: And those days, where did you go to school in Maui?

KM: Maui High School, which was out in Hāmākua Poko. We had only one high school, Maui High School. We went by train. And then came back with train. Some went by bus. No, not bus, cars, all cars. Trucks. Same trucks that transported us during the summer to work in the cane fields. I worked in the cane fields as a high school kid, for fifteen cents an hour. They had no child labor law, but the plantation was very considerate, you know. Very human. There's a lot of racial talk these days, but one thing in Hawai'i, especially on Maui, the plantation bosses and the wealthy, *Haole*, so-called *Haole* people, were very, very religious people. They're missionary descendants. And they were very conscious of how they treat other human beings fairly and compassionately. And that's how we were influenced by the early missionary descendant plantation bosses. Although they lived at a very strictly racially segregated style. In every plantation, every plantation village, the highest section was always occupied by the *Haole*, non-Japanese, non-Oriental people. The so-called plantation *luna*s plantation bosses, the highest section.

WN: We stop right here, we have to change tape.

MK: We'll stop here, we'll change the tape.

JC: The following is a continuation of the Katsuro Miho interview. This is videotape number two.

MK: This is tape number two, interview with Mr. Katsuro Miho. Okay, you were talking to us about the *luna*s being up on the hill.

KM: Oh, yes. And all the way down the line. In those days, there were no Filipino immigrants, my days. The so-called lowest in the plantation social status were the Okinawan people. Even the Japanese had very—not very—but they had their prejudices against their own kind. You folks in Honolulu don't realize it, but I did on Maui. In the plantations, we all did. We, for instance, did not look with affection, I really shouldn't say affection, but people from Fukushima, who could not speak fluent Japanese because their accent was *zūzū*. Their accent was different. And so they were ridiculed by the Hiroshima Japanese. Or like the Kumamoto, the strong plantation workers, Kumamoto-*ken* people were *batten*. So we had racial prejudice, *Haole*s against Japanese and so on. But the Japanese themselves had prejudices against their own kind.

I remember my father, as school principal in Keāhua, Japanese-language school principal, had a speech contest one day in which the school, entire school body, student body, (individuals were) selected by teachers, to give speeches of welcome to the Japanese training ship that came to Kahului, Maui, for the first time. And so they had to give a welcome speech in Japanese they have prepared. And the one that my father selected was—no, the one that was selected by one of the teachers—was an Okinawan boy. (Steven Chinen, long-time head of laboratory at Kuakini Hospital.) I still remember him. He's still living. Good friend of mine. And so the parents objected very much. They said, "No, no, no, you can't have him, he's from Okinawa."

"So what?" my father said. "So what? This is not *ken* against *ken*, province against province.

We're selecting a student to represent the school." And there was a big rumpus about that selection. So my father finally said, "You either accept him as our representative, this young man, or I'll resign from your school. Take (him) or (else)." You know. He was that hard-headed.

MK: He was willing to take stands then.

KM: Oh, yes. He defied the whole PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] movement in his own school. (Eventually he quit teaching to work as manager for Onishi Store in Kahului.)

(Laughter)

KM: The Japanese students were paying very small amounts, you know. And then the—but we had a wonderful social life. Wonderful social life. And the social life was centered around the bathhouse. You folks have no idea, but in every plantation, but especially where I grew up, Keāhua, there was a big bathhouse, maybe almost as big as that room there, in which they boiled the water underneath direct heat. And there was a woman's side and a men's side, separated by the cloth towels, you know. So we'd peek in like this, you know, until the women threw water on our faces. And one time, one of my friends brought in a frog.

(Laughter)

KM: And as soon as he released him into the—as soon as he released it into the *wahine* side, you know, the frog died.

(Laughter)

KM: I never forget. And we were chased out. Well anyway, there was a lot of fun, though, because in this bathhouse, there's so much went on. Like, for instance, during the time that the bath was being, the water was being heated, the fire would be so big underneath, you know, that all the kids, us kids, would put sweet potatoes in the coal and to cook it, you see. And I don't know if you've ever tasted charcoal-, sand-, and dust-roasted sweet potatoes, oh, but that's one of the sweetest ways to cook sweet potatoes. (MK and WN chuckle.) Oh, yeah, we'd get all dirty in potato ash, all of us, and take a bath, you know.

WN: So this is out in Keāhua, you said?

KM: Yeah.

WN: So way out there by. . . . That was far from Kahului, yeah?

KM: Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. Kahului was, eh, many years later on.

MK: So you had your boyhood in Keāhua, and also in Kahului.

KM: Uh huh. And also in Honolulu.

MK: And also in Honolulu. And you went to Maui High School.

KM: Maui High School.

MK: I was wondering, you know, while you were at Maui High School, did you get involved in student activities, student government?

KM: I was student vice president, two years in a row. And I was also, yeah, student—I was made—I don't know how it appeared or how it came about, but I was made permanent president of my class in 1931, my high school. We had a reunion 1981, you know, fiftieth reunion. I still have the picture somewhere around there.

MK: And what made you get involved in those type of student activities?

KM: Well, I don't know of any reason, except that I became interested, and I was always getting, I was always not afraid, I was always not hesitant to give my opinion on things. You see, the students of my age in those days in public school were. . . . One of the Japanese traits was to be *otonashii*, was to keep your place. Don't talk too much, just study, listen to the teacher. We weren't supposed to act knowledgeable, you know. Show-offy. But my father being the kind of man he was, I didn't hesitate to say what I thought was right or wrong. I always gave my opinion, see. That's one reason, I think, I became sort of selected by the teachers and the students to lead them, you know.

MK: And what were your feelings about being in that kind of leadership position?

KM: I enjoyed it, I guess, yeah. I don't remember the details, but I think I enjoyed it, yeah, being the leader of the class, yeah.

MK: And back in those days, were you doing some sort of part-time work to supplement the family income?

KM: Yes, I, oh, yes. I worked in the plantation, as I told you, since I was about fourteen years old. We being recruited by plantation trucks, would come over to our camps, our district, and pack us all into this huge truck, white truck, I remember. I still remember the white truck (tires,) there's no tubes, you know, (tires were) solid rubber. So that they would not puncture, you see. And we'd go over to the plantation and work for (five) hours a day for, I think, until it's lunchtime. And my mother always used to say, "My goodness, you boys eat more than you worth." (MK chuckles.) We so hungry. We go, I think, we went to work more to eat the lunch than anything else.

(Chuckles)

KM: And Mama would pack everything good to eat in the lunch box. In those days, the lunch box was round, you know. Rice underneath and *okazu* in the middle. Oh yeah. And then from there, I worked in the plantation—I mean, I got old enough, I became a pineapple cannery worker. I was about fifteen, I think, fourteen, fifteen, yeah. And it was against the law, technically, *ne?* Child labor law was just beginning. But I stretched one year or two in the application and worked in this Palola plantation. Not Palola, Ha'ikū plantation cannery.

Pineapple—talk about horticulture—pineapple was really made possible by the Japanese labor, you know. Yeah. Did you know that in those early days, there was no pipes or any irrigation

system in the pineapple fields? They had to bring water to irrigate the pineapple fields once in a while, and scoop it, the water, by hand. Ladle, you know, and water each plant as they went along. You know, huge barrel, water barrel, hauled in by horse and truck—horse and wagon. That's how the plantation pineapple fields were developed, yes, in marginal land where nothing else would grow. And they had to wait a year and a half before the pineapple would mature, you see. So they had a difficult time in the early pineapple days to achieve what they did, finally.

MK: Very labor-intensive, then.

KM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. And then I went to University of Utah and during the summer, I worked as a lettuce farmer. During the year, I worked in this noodle shop, chop suey house, for my meals. I washed dishes every day after school. And weekends, Saturday and Sunday, I worked as a waiter. Later on, as assistant cook, but I worked steadily, and then the first summer, I worked as a farmer, full-fledged farmer from sun up to sundown, in a place called Kamas, Utah. I guess, it's a big city, now. Kamas, Utah, way up on the hills. Lettuce, you see, will not curl unless it's high enough and cold enough. We watered a lot and then the leaves get curled. We called it, "iceberg" [lettuce]. And then when the lettuce became mature, that's when we had a rushing time because the lettuce had to be packed overnight. Because if you waited too long, about two or three days too late, the *buggahs* would shoot up, you know, it'll begin to flower, you see. And when it starts that, it's so bitter that you can't eat it. Did you know that?

WN: Mm mmm [no].

KM: Yes. And so we had to go and chop, cut each lettuce with a special hoe. And pack it in ice, going all night long we had to pack it, until, you know, I never realized, but my fingers, although we wore cloth gloves, my finger(nails) would gradually come off. Did you know that? There's so much acid in the lettuce. And since I was new, I didn't know how to take care. One day I got up in the morning, you know, and I wanted to wash my face, and wonder what's happened. My fingernails are off. When I pulled this one, this one came off. It was hanging on. I just went, "What happened?" to my friend, you know.

He said, "Oh. That's lettuce something."

And so when school started in September, I had to wrap each fingertips with the bandage, and write. I had to wait, I think about half a year before it became normal, gradually, you know. Oh, miserable time, because each time that I touch that, it's sore, you know. And I couldn't show it because it's so miserable, terrible-looking, you know.

And then, that was in Kamas, Utah, way up on the hill.

And we had to fight the groundhogs. Groundhogs—you know what a groundhog is, like a mouse, huge mouse? They start eating the lettuce from the bottom. They come up at night, eat the (tape inaudible). It got so numerous, that one day the boss said, "Pour poison grain. Give 'em poison grain, poison them."

So we all had a bag and put poison grain in each hole, each hole. And we waited for a few days, and summer is so hot. Pretty soon, there was an awful smell in the whole place. We

had about two or three acres of lettuce. And the neighbors way down a mile or so, when the wind blows, they come complain, "What you folks doing over here," you know.

So the boss said, "We have to get rid of the groundhogs."

"How?"

"Well, I'll show you how." So he got the river, and we had a flow come in, where the water was diverted from the river, way up on the hill, and each farm, lettuce farm was flooded with water, all night long until the water went into the holes, you see. And the groundhogs drown, and they die, and they float out. And that was a mess, we had to burn them. Put them in a huge pile and burn 'em with the kerosene.

Did you ever hear of anybody eating porcupine? You know what a porcupine is? They're wonderful eating.

WN: Yeah, what does it taste like?

KM: Pork.

WN: Is that right?

KM: Very bloody pork. It's wonderful eating.

MK: Okay, we'll end here and change tapes.

WN: Change tapes.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is a continuation of the Katsuro Miho interview. This is videotape number three.

MK: Tape three, interview with Mr. Katsuro Miho. And we were just talking about your days in Utah when you were going to college there, and we were wondering, how did you end up in Utah?

KM: Well, that's an old story. When I graduated Maui High School in '31, the Mormon missionaries that came (dog barks) to Maui, they were all over Hawai'i trying to get interest, get the Hawaiian people—Japanese in Hawai'i especially—interested in the Mormon church. And so there were few Japanese, so-called Mormon missionaries. One came to Maui, and they wanted me to join the Mormon church and offered me a scholarship, not a scholarship, but a working scholarship in Utah, to go to University of Utah. That's the reason I went there.

MK: And you mentioned that while you were in Utah, you helped establish a JACL [Japanese

American Citizens League] chapter there.

KM: That's right. Mm hmm. And Mike Masaoka who's a sort of the godfather of the JACL movement today, violently opposed the establishment of JACL chapter (chimes in background) in Utah, because it was too Japanese. He say, "If anything, we are in America, we're not in Japan." Those times a lot of Japanese (tape inaudible). He opposed it, but he wanted, he grew up enough, he grew up to learn that he was wrong. That we're not JACL, JACL was (tape inaudible). In fact, I was (tape inaudible). *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*.

(Chuckles)

WN: How did you first hear of the JACL and why did you get active in it?

KM: Well, I don't remember too much of a detail, but I was writing with Dr. Saul Sasaki of Brooklyn who's still active in many—who came to visit me just a few months ago. Dr. Sasaki and I, and a few others were interested in introducing Japanese culture into the American scene. And so we started a movement and called this magazine publication, *Reimei*, called the *New Dawn*, *Reimei*. That's why my second son David is called David Rae. David Rae. *Reimei*. And in that movement, I was the business manager, which meant I took all those folders, business folios. I had occasion to write to many of the JACL people especially in California, not because of the movement, but because of the magazine that we were interested in. Like Larry Tajiri, later on [writer for] the *Denver Post*, and Marly Oyama. The nisei literati of those days. And we published this magazine called *Reimei*. One or two issues, I still have around the house someplace.

And we translated Arthur Waley's Japan books. We introduced *Makura [no] soshi* [*The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*], we translated *Genji monogatari*, *The Tale of Genji*, many of those things, to the American public who had not known those things. And I went into debt because I couldn't pay the bill. There were not enough readers or people to pay the price. So many years later, many, many years later, Murray Utah Press was the one that published, took a chance and published for us.

We stopped by, on our trip to the Mainland, Jayne [KM's wife] and I took a trip to the Mainland, 1950, I think it was, I stopped by Murray Press in Utah. Talk about *giri-ninjō*, and the printing shop was still there. The owner was different, but it was his son who was carrying on or something. Son or uncle or something. And I stopped by and he said, "Yes sir, what can I do for you?"

So I told him the story about, "I think *Reimei* magazine owes you some money. I was the business manager, and we never got around to paying you because we never had enough money."

He said, "Oh, yes. I remember. I remember you. Not you, but I remember the magazine, *Reimei*. Your friend, Dr. Sasaki, according to this note, paid this up many years ago. Why do you want to pay this again?"

I said, "No, I just want to make sure I don't pay double."

He said, "Well, sir, it was a long wait, but he paid it."

(Chuckles)

KM: Talk about *giri-ninjō*.

MK: So it's from your interest in *Reimei* that you got into the JACL.

KM: JACL movement, uh huh. Yes.

MK: Also during those years, you talked about a political science professor named Dr. Elbert Thomas.

KM: Elbert D. Thomas, yeah. Later high commissioner, first high commissioner of the Trust Territories.

MK: And what influence did he have on you, being your political science professor back then?

KM: Oh, he had a great influence on us, Asian-American students, because he loved things Japanese, and he loved Japanese literature. And later on, he became the senator from Utah. And during the days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he was chairman of the armed forces committee of the Senate. And he was one of those who actively advocated not destroying Kyoto, Japan, and not bombing the Imperial Palace grounds during the war [World War II] years, because of his respect and his love of things culturally Japanese, and the importance of the part that Japanese imperial household played among the Japanese people.

MK: And I know that after you graduated from the University of Utah, you went to law school.

KM: Yes.

MK: Where did you go, and why did you choose that particular school?

KM: Well, I had to look for a school that I could work my way through, and I had just been notified that I would receive the last Prince Fushimi scholarship, which was a $1,000 from Japan, a $1,000 scholarship, outright scholarship to the nisei in Hawai'i, Prince Fushimi. And I didn't apply for it, but somebody applied for it in my name. Dr. Iga Mori of Honolulu was chairman. And so I was very happy because that scholarship was sufficient to pay my tuition. I think the tuition at the law school those days, at George Washington [University, in Washington D.C.], was $250 a semester. Imagine. So low. And so it was enough to pay my tuition. But I had to work for my meals, and so forth.

And there was a George Washington alumni, a Mormon man named Vernon Romney, descendant of one of the early Romney family, prominent Utah Mormon family, and Vernon Romney said, "Don't worry, I'll get you a job there." And so he introduced me to George Washington University school and helped me land a job there.

I became a typewriter mechanic, back to typewriter mechanic. When I was going to high school in Maui, I was always dexterous, good with my hands and toes, and there's a man named Nishino, Janet Nishino's grandfather in Mō'ili'ili that used to come to different islands to fix typewriters and adding machines. And he'd come to Maui, and I was always available to run his errands. Pretty soon, I was interested in fixing the machines with him. And he

looked at me and he says, "Oh, this man, this young man will be worth hiring." So he gave me a few dollars and hired me after school. One year later, I was in charge of all the Maui High School typewriters and fixing their machines. And so when I went to George Washington [University], they called me their only and best typewriter mechanic east of the Mississippi, yeah.

MK: (Chuckles) Yeah, I forgot to ask you, but why did you want to become a lawyer?

KM: Well, I had two reasons. One of the main reason is because I thought, and I thought of it a great deal, that law was the only process by which the Asian Japanese-American, Chinese-American, Korean-American, so-called minority races, American races, people could get equality under the law, that law was the only way, the quickest way and the best way, the shortest way. And so I had to choose between going into the ministry or going into law. And I discussed it with my father. Because one summer I came back to Maui before going back to law school. And I told him, we'd argued about it, and he said, "You're right, law is the only way." The equalizer. And so I took up law.

MK: Oh, okay. And then after you got your law degree [in 1938], you came back to Honolulu, and started your career as an attorney.

KM: Yes, which is more or less, chapter two, interesting one. I came back, and in those days, there were only about four or five other lawyers before me. That's [Wilfred] Tsukiyama, [Masaji] Marumoto, (Robert) Murakami—Tsukiyama, Marumoto, Murakami and couple others. I was about the sixth nisei attorney in Hawai'i. [Benjamin] Tashiro and me, you know. Tsukiyama was a prominent nisei attorney already. He was a city and county lawyer, attorney. And the Japanese looked up to him a great deal, and my father knew him, so he wrote me a letter. Wrote him a letter introducing me and so forth. I took this letter to go and see Tsukiyama. You heard the name?

MK: Mm hmm.

KM: And Donald is his son, you know. And Wilfred Tsukiyama said, "Well, are you going to apply for the examination this fall?"

I said, "Yes," those days October.

And so Mr. Tsukiyama said, "And you expect to pass?"

"Oh yes, sure, I want to pass because I owe a lot of people a lot of money. Obligation, I have an obligation to pay back. The quicker I become a full-fledged lawyer, the best, the better."

So he says, "Well, I'm sorry to tell you, but—remind you Miho—but tomorrow morning when you wash your face, look in the mirror closely."

I said, "What for? I look in my mirror every day."

He said, "No, look at it very closely."

I ask him what he's driving at. And a few days later I went back, and among other things and

asked him, "Mr. Tsukiyama, why did you want me to look in my mirror?"

"Well, I just wanted to remind you that everything is fine. But you of the wrong complexion to pass the bar the first time." In those days, my days, to get into the profession in Hawai'i, especially dentistry, law, take for instance the architecture, especially architecture, medicine and so forth, to be an Asiatic, you couldn't get the first time. You had to apply two, three, four, five, six times. There was a barrier against Asiatic Americans to enter the professions. It's hard for you people to realize that, but that's how it was. And Mr. Tsukiyama just wanted to remind me that the best grades is not enough, but don't let it discourage, you know. But happily, I passed the first time, with the first application.

WN: You mean, you're saying that they wouldn't let the AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] pass it, or they wouldn't let them take it, or even—what if . . .

KM: Oh, they took it, then they paid the fee, entrance fee, and our grades were just as good, if not better. But just because we were Asiatic, non-*Haole* Americans, we were not given the right to become fully qualified. That was a prejudice, that was prejudice.

MK: So regardless of how well you did on the test, they could still keep you from entering the bar.

KM: That's right, you know. In fact, architecture was one of the worst. And I think I am very proud of the fact that I broke the barrier against the architects. I helped break it. Because one year, my partner Hiram Fong, by that time, became very powerful, the speaker of the house, and there was no Japanese architectural firm, those days. There was one person named [Hego] Fuchino who was transferred from the Mainland, I think. But anyway, Ernest Hara, and a few others, good architects, they all worked as draftsmen in an architectural *Haole* firm. But they could not qualify as a full-fledged architect. And so on. Our way, I told the leading architectural firm, "My partner Hiram Fong says,"—he's speaker of the house, as you know, a very powerful person—"this appropriation for the new library in Kaua'i, new hospital or something, whatever it was, taxpayers' money, will be appropriated on one understanding. That there be no racial barriers against the Oriental architects. And if he has your assurance, he will see to it that the bill is passed." That's how he got that bill passed. That's how we broke that barrier against—I thought they should apologize or what, but the barrier against Oriental architects were broken.

MK: When did it become possible for Oriental lawyers to have that kind of fair shake?

KM: Gradually, after my time. I became a lawyer examiner. You know how ironical it is? I became a law examiner, one of those who give examinations to applicants, many years later, you know. And the chief justice, Ed Towse called me into his office one day. He was chief justice of Hawai'i. He said, "Hey, Miho."

"Yeah."

"I want you to be a member of our board of governors."

"But why me? I'm so busy. I just trying to make a few dollars and make a living, I just got married a few years ago."

He said, "No, never mind that, never mind that. You talking all the time about equality, equality, equality. Well, I want you to live up to your word. I put you on the board, make sure that there's no prejudice against Oriental lawyers or any non-*Haole* lawyers, Everybody gets equal rights, same rights." You see, Ed Towse, chief justice, grew up in Hawai'i, born and raised in Hawai'i.

WN: Okay, why don't we stop right here, yeah?

MK: Okay.

JC: This is a continuation of the Katsuro Miho interview. This is videotape number four.

MK: Number four, interview with Mr. Katsuro Miho. Mr. Miho, we were talking about Ed Towse, and your being on the legal examiners board.

KM: Yes, so Ed Towse put me on there to make it fair, no racial prejudice. And so I proposed, in those days, up to those days, there was a written and an oral examination. Now, when you have an oral examination, you have all those examiners, six or seven on the bench, and your poor little young attorney trying to pass it, nine old-time lawyers are throwing questions at you, they can almost kill you, you know. And so, I finally got the board and the chief justice to agree with me that the verbal examination was out. We'll do away with that. And that's how the oral examination section was thrown out. I told them how unfair it could be, and how unfair it was in the past. Because if any one of the those nine examiners or seven examiners wanted to kill you, he'll kill you at the oral examination and mark you right down. Right? No lawyer can remember everything under the law and pass it. No lawyer, impossible.

And so there was—and then I proposed we add another ten dollars to our entrance fee, and get our law exams and answers under sealed envelope from the National Bar Association. Local bar examiners will have only one phase of the examination. That will be the Organic Act [of 1900], the law that Congress passed that made Hawai'i into a state [KM means territory]. Organic Act, the basic law of our land, of Hawai'i. And which is not too difficult, you know. But the regular, legal examinations will all come under sealed envelope from the National Bar Examiners organization, under sealed envelope, and only the clerk of the supreme court will have access to it. And we, as examinees, will all have numbers, that's all, so that nobody could put any shenanigans over us. I don't know what it is now, looks like today, 100 people apply and 100 people pass, but it's still working in the reverse. But, don't quote me, but that's how it was, you know.

MK: Well, that's something that we've really learned today.

KM: Well, the local—I know one good friend of mine who took the bar examination fifteen, twenty times. I know I heard of one early nisei attorney who came out of a good law school who applied here two or three times, and he left Hawai'i and went to Japan to start to practice law, you know. Saburo Kido, who's gone now, he was the first JACL president. [Saburo Kido was the first JACL national secretary.] He was a Hawai'i boy, Hilo boy, Saburo Kido, but he didn't practice law here.

MK: So through your efforts, we got a reform of the legal examination system.

KM: Oh, yes. I'm glad that I had something to do with it.

MK: And then when you started practicing as an attorney, you became associated with [Ingram] Stainback and [Wilson] Moore?

KM: No, with Hiram Fong.

MK: Hiram Fong.

KM: No, I became—I'm sorry. I became a law clerk with Stainback, Stainback and what's his name—[Edward] Massee. Stainback and Massee. And later on, Stainback, Massee and Moore.

MK: And how did you get that job with that Stainback firm?

KM: Tsukiyama. He's used (to be) with them because, Stainback was a hard man to work with. No law clerk lasted more than two or three months. Very niggardly in paying. So, but I determined to be a good lawyer, good head, good movement. And I was determined to work because our so-called large law firms, in those days, would not hire Oriental attorneys, you know. You never saw any. Look at the list, you see. Only [Arthur] Smith, [Urban] Wild, [Eugene] Beebe, and [Russell] Cades, all *Haole* attorneys; [Robbins] Anderson, [Benjamin Marx, Heaton] Wrenn, and [Livingston] Jenks, all *Haole* attorneys. [Roy] Vitousek, Greten with [C. Dudley] Pratt and [Daniel] Ridley—Pratt and Jenks. [A.G.M.] Robertson, [Alfred] Castle, and [J. Garner] Anthony. All, nothing but *Haole* attorneys, no Oriental, not in those days, not in my days.

WN: What type of man was Ingram Stainback, besides being a hard person to work for?

KM: He was a very fair-minded man. Basically, good American, but he had strong likes and dislikes. He was a hardheaded, what was he, so-called curmudgeon. Yeah. He couldn't get along with anybody. He could not get along.

WN: Well, he was from, I believe, Tennessee.

KM: Tennessee.

WN: You know, as far as his views on racial equality, civil rights, how was he?

KM: I don't know much about his racial equality, those things, but I believe, basically, he was a typical Southerner, and the prejudices against race. But their prejudices against the Negro race and against the Oriental race in Hawai'i were quite different, because we did not have any Negroes, many Negroes here. Just a few that you could count on. You know. Stainback was quite a fair-minded man that way, but he had strong prejudices—I mean, strong likes and dislikes. He was a hardheaded man from Tennessee. He was a Princeton University English professor, you know. Yeah. And then he became a lawyer. I think he's a Princeton Law School graduate [Stainback graduated from the University of Chicago Law School] and was a teacher in Tennessee. Stainback, Massee. Massee was a lovely old man. Nice man.

JM: He first gave us seventy-five. (Chuckles)

KM: What she [Jayne Miho, KM's wife] said?

WN: I didn't hear.

JM: I think his first—first got paid was seventy-five dollars a month. (Chuckles)

WN: You got seventy-five dollars a month when you first started clerking?

KM: That's right, yeah. When I married, yeah.

MK: Gee. And you know, Stainback was a Democrat, he was a . . .

KM: Democratic, yeah.

MK: . . . Democratic governor. Was it through your association with Stainback that you entered Democratic politics?

KM: No, no. No. I entered politics, not as a Democrat. As a non-partisan because my partner by that time was Hiram Fong. And he had been in the war, was taken in the war, judge advocate's office. So I took over his [private] office, see. And he's a Republican. In fact, he was just elected as a member of the house from the fifth district. Those days, the fifth district was all Democrats—the poor district. The rest of it was all Republican, the high-class district. But the fifth district, from Kalihi, your [MK's] uncle's side, that side, were the social outcasts, political down-and-outery, yeah. So the Democrat party flourished in the fifth district, the poor man's district. So, if you were a Democrat running for political office from the fifth district, you got elected. But if you were Republican, you were dumped. It went by class consciousness, not race.

MK: But Hiram Fong was a Republican.

KM: Yes, but he was born and raised—he was raised in Kalihi, and everybody knew him and his family. In fact, there were eleven in his family, I think, and grew up in the poorest Kalihi family.

WN: How did you first meet Hiram Fong?

KM: On the streets, on Merchant Street. One day, Judge Moore, for whom I was working, Moore and Stainback, the war had started. And Judge Moore was very scared about the Japanese invading Hawai'i. So he shipped all what little money we had in the joint account to San Francisco for safekeeping. I said, "Gee, Judge Moore, why you want to do that? The Japanese haven't come here yet."

"No, I want to play it safe." So we got our checks from San Francisco Bank of America, I guess, and so don't worry about that. But anyway, we did our banking with the San Francisco bank.

Oh, and by that time, I was married, and so I went up to Stainback and said, "I'm going to get married so I need a little more extra money. Can't you pay me, raise my salary?"

He said, "Well, you young people are always asking for money, money, money, money, money. What do you think your wife is going to be worth?" In fact, he gave her her name, Jayne.

I said, "Well, I think a hundred dollars more would be nice."

He said, "I give you fifty dollars more. Make it hundred." I think hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, or hundred fifty dollars a month. And so I got a little raise to get married on. Didn't have to pay my marriage license. (WN and MK chuckles.)

MK: And you were saying that you met Hiram Fong on Merchant Street?

KM: On Merchant Street. So I started worrying about what to do. I didn't like Mr. Moore, Judge Moore too much because I feel he's that way, and he's always so pennypincher. And Hiram was looking for somebody to take over his office, because he was already called in the army. He was in the reserve as a lawyer, judge advocate's office. So he was looking for somebody to take over his office. So he says, "Eh, Miho"—running into each other all the time on Merchant Street going to court and back and forth. The police station was near there. So Hiram says, "Hey, Miho, what are you going to do? Open your own office or you're going to stay with Moore?"

"Oh, I want to get out of that office. I'm sick and tired of staying over there," which is right around the corner, McCandless Building.

He says, "Yeah, you really want to get out of all this?"

"Yeah, I want to get out."

"You want to be on your own?"

"No, not necessarily, but why? Why you ask?"

"Well, I have to go to war, so I'm looking for somebody to hold my office, 77 Merchant Street."

"Oh, you looking at the right man."

And he says, "Yeah, Dan Wong told me about you." Dan Wong was an insurance man, and good friend, Maui friend, and was a good friend of mine. "And Dan Wong says, 'Oh, with young Miho, I trust him 100 percent. I know the family, the whole family from Maui days. You can trust the guy, he'd be all right. He'd make good partner for you, politically in Hawai'i.' That's right, Dan Wong says, 'Yeah.' " Oh, well. So we decided right then and there on the street.

MK: The partnership was born.

KM: Oh, fortunately it was harmonized right there on the street, 77 Merchant Street.

WN: What year was this?

KM: Nineteen . . .

WN: Nineteen forty-two?

KM: Forty-two, yeah, around there.

WN: So it was known as Fong and Miho?

KM: Mm hmm.

MK: And at that time, Fong was Republican, you were a nonpartisan?

KM: Mm hmm.

MK: Okay. You know at about that time, the war years, you got involved with the Emergency Service Committee. Can you talk on that for a while?

KM: Emergency Service Committee, yeah. Well, that was organized by the G-2 military, the military governor's office from a man named Charlie Loomis. And he was a nice ex-YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] man and good friend of mine. And Mr. Loomis got us together at the Nu'uanu YMCA. And he talked about all this emotion being stirred up by the war and the Japanese community all worried over what's going to happen, and this is it. And the Emergency Service Committee, he said, would be for the purpose of, under the military governor, to see that no unwanted rumors, no—not unwanted, but no groundless rumors would disturb the Japanese community, then we will have equal protection under the law, and that everybody, as long as they obey the law, would be left undisturbed. It was to quiet bad rumors, and to achieve a semblance of—not semblance but achieve cohesion. See, there was another movement in those days by some *Haole* friends of ours who wanted to ship the Japanese to Moloka'i. All the Japanese on other islands to Moloka'i and Lāna'i, like just like the relocation camps in California, which was quite a movement among a certain group. And we knew about that, so this Emergency Service Committee, one of its aims was to counteract, was to prevent such things from happening. And that's how I got involved, that's how I got involved.

MK: And how would you counteract unfounded rumors, or how would you achieve the goals of the committee back then?

KM: We had district meetings all the time. District meetings in Japanese language, district meetings in English language. We would seek out the leaders among the different groups, Kalihi district, Kāne'ohe district, and so on, and talk to them. "Oh no, that's not true."

For instance, there was one group that, I still remember, that said that Japan is winning the war. And after the war, this group, same group said Japan won the war, this rumor that, this story that Japan lost the war is a bunk, that's only propaganda, American propaganda. Actually, Japan won the war. That's strange, you know. So, we went up to—this was in the federal court, he was hauled into the federal court, and he was sort of a nutty person, and the judge said, "Miho, would you take this gentleman, and tell him that if he keeps on ranting like this, I'll have to really put him behind bars. And it won't be fair, it won't be fair to his family, and it won't do him any good. And he's not crazy, but he's going to be if he keeps

this up. So will you talk to him?" So I talked to him, I took care of him. I convinced him that Japan had really lost the war.

MK: Okay, shall we end here, and go on to the next tape?

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-39-1-89; SIDE ONE

JC: The following is a continuation of the Katsuro Miho interview. This is videotape number five.

MK: So this is tape number five, interview with Mr. Katsuro Miho. We had just stopped talking about the Emergency Service Committee and your involvement in that, and before we move on into a later period, I wanted to ask you about your involvement in the Expatriation Movement.

KM: Oh, yes. There was an Expatriation Movement, because just before the war, there was a lot of wrong information and disruptive information about the loyalty of Japanese-Americans because of their dual citizenship. Under the law, Japanese law and American law, if you were born in America, American soil, you were an American citizen, regardless of any of the claims on you. But under Japanese law, you were also Japanese citizen. So we all had Japanese citizenship and American citizenship. And so we decided—few of us leaders got together and decided it is not necessary to have two citizenships. Besides, it causes all this commotion and trouble, so let's get the Japanese government to agree to voluntarily give up the Japanese citizenship. Because under the law, you see, you could not give it up, Japanese law. So the Japanese law in Japan, through the local consulate, I think, passed a law making it possible for niseis to expatriate, get rid of their Japanese claim, and become 100 percent American citizens. That's what they called the Expatriation Movement. Yeah. [The Japanese government revised its citizenship law in December 1924, such that children born in the United States, to Japanese immigrants, could not obtain Japanese citizenship unless they were registered with the Japanese Consul within fourteen days after birth. In addition, those born in the U.S. prior to the revision could renounce their Japanese citizenship through the consular offices. KM might be referring to a later movement which petitioned to allow nisei to renounce their Japanese citizenship through declaration in front of a U.S. court of law, rather than through the required and cumbersome legal procedures.]

MK: So you were active in trying to get the law in Japan changed and in getting people here to . . .

KM: Oh, yes. We got it changed. We got it changed.

MK: And you encouraged nisei here to remove their dual citizenship.

KM: That's right.

MK: What was the reaction of most of the nisei population to this idea?

KM: Oh I think, on the majority we had a good understanding. But many of them were very negative about it. Indifferent about it.

WN: What about the issei? How did they feel about this?

KM: Like my father, issei people did not quite agree, you know. If my recollection's correct, they would say that it's just window dressing, you know. So, they were more or less opposed to it, yeah. Like the Walter-McCarran [Immigration and Naturalization] Act, which eliminated racial barriers against American citizenship was passed [in 1952]. And I was one of those leaders. In fact, I was the only JACL interested member over here, who knew anything about JACL. And we raised a $150,000 in those days. I still remember the figure, $150,000. From neighbor island, James Hirano from Hilo, Ben Tashiro, Judge Ben Tashiro from Kaua'i, me [and also Tetsu Oi] here [on O'ahu], and from Maui, I forgot who it was, I think it was [Shizuichi] "Shizu" Mizuha. We raised $150,000 for that movement. [Other sources claim that these men raised a sum in excess of $250,000.]

MK: So you lobbied for the McCarran Act.

KM: For lobbying purposes, Walter-McCarran Act. And my father, when it was passed (telephone rings), my father said, "No, I'm not going to expatriate myself. It's too late for me."

MK: So your father never took advantage of that and became a U.S. citizen?

KM: No. The Japanese paper really played it up. (WN and MK chuckle.)

MK: Oh.

KM: Here's a young man who worked so hard to raise money for the movement and his father says, "No."

(Chuckles)

WN: I was wondering at that time, was your grandfather still alive?

KM: No, he was gone.

WN: He was gone.

MK: Move into statehood?

WN: I was wondering, when Stainback became governor [in 1942], were you involved at all in his administration at all?

KM: Yes. Well, I was more or less his background advisor. Anything to do with the community, not only Japanese, anything to do with the community. Because he was not a social man. And he didn't like to mix up with the crowd. He'd always call me, and I'd go into his back, at his palace grounds office through the back, and he'd tell me what his problems were, what advice he wanted, you know. And he would get it straight from my shoulder.

WN: Did he ever tell you what he wanted to accomplish during his term as governor?

KM: Yes. He didn't quite believe we would get statehood, you know. Although he put me on the statehood commission and helped us a lot, and that's one of the reasons why he was removed as governor, because he didn't work hard enough for statehood. But so-called personal goals for governor, he did not have much. He didn't have much.

WN: When you say he didn't think we'd get statehood, what do you mean?

KM: Maybe I should say he didn't think statehood was good for Hawai'i, you know. Or maybe he was a little prejudice mixed up with it, I don't know. I never asked him point-to-point, face-to-face. But I know that that was one of the reasons he was removed as governor because he did not work hard enough for statehood, yeah.

WN: How did you personally feel about statehood?

KM: Oh, I felt very strongly for statehood. I worked hard for statehood. As I said, I was a member of the statehood commission from the beginning to almost to the end, the only nisei on it, yeah. (Birds chirping in the background.) I spent every year on a long trip to Washington D.C. to Congress to appear before the congressional committees, advocating statehood for Hawai'i. Yeah.

WN: What was some of the opposition that you came up across when you were lobbying?

KM: Well, it's a part of the *Congressional Record*. One of the, one of the strongest opposition reasons was racial. I forgot his name, but this man was from the South, and he opposed us. You know, [the opposition believed] Hawai'i was taken all by the Japanese, as they do now.

(Laughter)

KM: It'll be taken over by the Japanese, then we'll have a Japanese colony in Hawai'i, if Hawai'i has statehood. And so we should never give them statehood, you know. Besides, it's geographically too far. There's no planes those days, flying over here and back. There's ship, you know.

MK: Why were you so strongly for statehood?

KM: I was so strongly for statehood because I figured, once we become a state and a part of the United States, part of the fifty states, it'll never change. We'll be a really full part of the United States. And all my friends and descendants of all races will have equal chance, equal protection, equal freedom under the law as full-fledged Americans. Yeah, which is coming to fruition. Yeah. I didn't want any semblage [KM probably means semblance] during my lifetime of our American rights being nibbled at. Because once you start, you're going to destroy the whole thing. You know, once you start, like the Berlin Wall, once you start crumbling, you destroy the whole thing.

MK: And I think you earlier mentioned that it was during, about this time that you became associated with Democratic party politics. I know that at that same time, the Burns group, Jack Burns and his young nisei group was rising. And there were also some other Democrats

like Stainback, Oren Long, Johnny Wilson, [Lincoln] McCandless, Takaichi Miyamoto, this group that was—it's been identified as the old guard.

KM: I'm the old guard.

MK: You're the old guard? Tell us about what was happening in the Democratic party then. What was the dynamics then?

KM: Well the war [World War II] has a lot to do with it. And Burns was just a police captain. But he had made good friends with Bill Norwood of Castle & Cooke, and Chad Dunstan, and Charlie Hemenway, and so on, and they used to have breakfast, which I never belonged to, Downtown, Alakea Grill. Or there was a Greek restaurant, I forgot the name, on Fort Street. We called it the greasy spoon. Greek restaurant run by a Greek. I forget the name, but anyway, the so-called Democrats on one side—the Republicans always ate, got together at the Commercial Club, see. You know, high class, rich people. The Democrats had to eat at the greasy spoon. Yeah. But I never belonged to that group. I had belonged to the old guard group, you know, yeah. And Jack Burns and I personally were never close. Never close. I don't think he quite agreed with some of my philosophy, and somehow we didn't get close. But I liked his wife, and I always paid my respects to his wife, Beatrice. She was a nice lady.

MK: And you know, you had this old guard group and the Burns group.

KM: Yes.

MK: Why couldn't they get along? They were all Democrats.

KM: Well, they couldn't get along because of the power struggle. You see, Burns represented the post-war, nisei wartime hero group like Dan Inouye and [Akira] "Sunshine" Fukunaga and [Nadao] "Najo" Yoshinaga from Maui, and that group, the wartime group. Burns befriended and stuck to them. The old guard group, naturally being a much, so much older, didn't know them quite well, you see. Yeah. But Burns knew, I think, that this young group would be the Democratic leaders of Hawai'i someday. And he made a full effort to make the best use of that group, the young group. I remember Dan Inouye, Jack Mizuha from Kaua'i, and others, were quite encouraged by Jack Burns. Yeah. Because he had nothing, you see. No money, no nothing. He's just an ex-police captain retired, and his close nisei young friends, that's the only thing he had. But he had this message of "You fellow get involved (chimes in background) with me, and we build up the Democratic party."

MK: You know, as a member of the old guard who was slowly losing power to this rising group, how did you feel?

KM: I never thought much of that, I never felt. . . . Oh, we'd make fun of it a lot of times. [Mitsuyuki] "Mits" Kido was one of the old-time guards. Takaichi Miyamoto was a very close friend of mine.

MK: You know, in doing some reading, I found that Takaichi Miyamoto had founded something called the Japanese Democratic Workers' Club. Were you familiar with that club?

KM: Oh, yeah. I was not a member, but he started a lot of things like that, you know. But he was

kind of ruthless in some ways, so far as wanting his ideas across. He was a doer, you know.

WN: Were there, besides not knowing anybody from the new Burns group, were there ideological differences between your group and the new Burns group? Were there differences in the Democratic platform, for example?

KM: Oh, say that again?

WN: Were there political and ideological differences between the old guard and the Burns group or was it more just Burns knowing these young people?

KM: I think it's a lot of Burns knowing the young people. I don't think there was too much ideological differences.

MK: And also during that time when Burns was coming into power, the Burns group often worked together with the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union], or were associated with the ILWU.

KM: Oh, there was that difference, yeah.

MK: How did the old guard react to that kind of combination?

KM: They thought that was quite, maybe, unwise. Unwise, you know, politically. Like Jack Kawano, who else was there? Jack Kawano or Major, something from Waipahu?

WN: Okada.

KM: Okada, [Hideo] "Major" Okada. From Maui, there was this poker friend of mine.

MK: Tom Yagi?

WN: Tom Yagi. (Chuckles)

KM: Tom Yagi, yeah. On Kaua'i, there was, oh, had quite a few on Kaua'i, Chris Watase, yeah.

MK: So there were some ideological differences.

KM: Mm hmm. There was some, yeah.

WN: Why did you feel it was unwise?

KM: Oh, I didn't myself feel that unwise, you know. Well, sometimes you can say this, that now, thinking of it hindsight, you see, there was a lot of mix-up with the ILWU. And you folks have no idea, but to become a union member, ILWU, in those days was like mixing with the devil in Hawai'i. We had, for instance, the women's Broom Brigade. Did you ever hear of it?

WN: Yeah.

KM: Anything as silly as that. But that's how much excited the *Haole* women, men, community

was. "We'll sweep them off the face of the earth," you know, Broom Brigade. They didn't want the union to put their roots here. But it's interesting in that respect, you know. When Jack Hall got established, the communist so-called flag was raised. And he's a card-carrying communist, Jack Kawano, and so forth. And there was a trial of the so-called ["Hawai'i Seven,"] court trial.

WN: Smith Act [which prohibits advocating the violent overthrow of the U.S. government].

KM: Smith Act, yeah.

WN: Why don't we stop right here.

MK: Should we stop here, yeah?

WN: Yeah, one more tape.

JC: The following is a continuation of the Katsuro Miho interview. This is videotape number six, and the last tape in the series for this interview.

KM: In the old guard, our group, my group, had a lot of Republican, local big shot friends that we had to get along with for business purposes, if nothing else. But you talk about *giri-ninjō*, we owed them a lot because they helped us out a lot, too. Business-wise and financially, too, you see. Remember in those days, there was no Japanese bank. There was Sumitomo and Yokohama Bank, but they were not too active as monetary lenders. The Hawai'i banks were. That's how the American Security Bank and all that grew up, Liberty Bank, you know, to help out the local Oriental people. Yeah. So the old guard had a very tough time, too. Business-wise, they had to get along and be on the goodwill side of the "Big Five" [C. Brewer & Co., Castle & Cooke Ltd., American Factors Ltd., Alexander & Baldwin Ltd., and Theo H. Davies & Company Ltd.]. And yet, they were misunderstood by the young Japanese, you know. They didn't realize, the young Japanese, Chinese, didn't realize those things. They looked at it from only one side. You take for instance your [WN's] grandpa's Iida's Suisandō, Iida's Store, that corner right there, they had, on was it Fort and Beretania?

WN: Nu'uanu and Beretania.

KM: Nu'uanu and Beretania. That building, you know. That was owned by—not Chinese, but non-Japanese, you know, until the Iida family bought it. But that was many, many years later. Most of the land was non-Oriental owned, you see, most of the land. Yeah. Our biggest difficulty in those days was lack of land control. Bishop Estate, Damon Estate would never loan it to Oriental people unless there was some big *Haole* group, association who was willing to say, give a good word or two. And you folks don't realize, but at Dillingham Airport, that whole section was a chicken farm, you know, chicken farm. Chickens were raised over there. And all the chicken farmers were Japanese and Chinese and Koreans. And when the airport, airplanes, clipper ships became numerous, one day one of the chicken raisers came up to the Damon—back to the bank and said, "Hey, what'sa matter you?"

Say, "Well, what happened?"

"Oh, too much trouble. Chicken no lay egg now."

"What do you mean 'no lay egg now.' What's that gotta do with the airplane?"

"Oh, too much noise. Chicken scared, no lay egg."

(Chuckles)

KM: I said, "Really?" That's what they told him.

"That's right. So we checked up on it, Kats."

And they checked up on it, and sure enough. The chickens stopped laying eggs. Well, they laid, but not so much like they used to. Instead of five, they lay two, maybe, you know. (Chuckles) That's how the chicken farms were all finally done away with.

MK: And that was on Damon Tract land?

KM: Yeah. You folks don't realize, but down at Mō'ili'ili, all that was Chinese ponds, you know. Rice ponds. (Birds chirping in the background.)

MK: But all these farmers who were on these estate lands had no recourse, then . . .

KM: That's right.

MK: . . . if the owner's wanted it to be used for other purposes.

KM: That's right, yeah.

MK: Okay.

WN: Well, you know, in interviewing your brother Katsugo, he was telling us how he got into politics, and how he ended up being a Republican. And the story he gave us was that you and Neal Blaisdell and Hiram Fong sort of talked him into running as a Republican. Is that pretty accurate? Do you remember how that story went?

KM: I don't remember that. No. Maybe they did, but I don't see how we could have gotten together.

WN: Were you close at all with Blaisdell?

KM: Well, I was one of his appointees. I was on the planning, city planning commission under him. Beyond that, I was a Wilson man, Johnny Wilson. The man who died with less than a dollar in his pocket. He was a great man for the common man, Johnny Wilson. I loved the old man. Every Christmas, as poor as I was, I'd order a new brown corduroy gabardine suit of clothes to present to Johnny Wilson. His suit was frayed, here and there. He always liked his brown gabardine. Now, I knew his tailor was my tailor. [Emanuel] Gazo. He had a shop on Alakea Street. And he knew exactly what Johnny Wilson liked, you see. Gazo, yeah.

(Taping is interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, you were just talking about Mayor Wilson. I was wondering, what made you so fond of the mayor?

KM: I liked the mayor because he had so many remembrances of old Japanese, Chinese, those olden days. And his personal life was so interesting. He said, for instance, he was the one that built the Nu'uanu road, you know. He had a company called Wilson or something [Wilson and Whitehouse], that built that Nu'uanu Pali Road. And the only other contractor who bid against him was Dillingham. And this is what he told me, you see. And he spoke always in pidgin English, he would say, "Miho, you know how this *Haole* high *makamaka*s are." He talks like that.

"No. What's that got to do with the Pali Road?"

"I tell you, the Japanese people, they make Nu'uanu Pali possible. They gave me the *Kumamoto rōdōsha*." Kumamoto muscle, in Japanese.

I said, "What do you mean?"

"Well, you know how windy that top is?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I built the road coming up from the Nu'uanu Pali side and coming up from the Kāne'ohe side until I came to the Pali. The wind was so strong, nobody would work on the last stretch because the wind would blow them and they'd fall in the Pali and *make*."

"What's that got to do with Kumamoto Japanese?"

"Well, Kumamoto Japanese only people willing to take a chance for me. And they went and put the last stretch. Kumamoto Japanese. That's why I'm all for Kumamoto Japanese." (MK chuckles.) I never forgot that.

MK: Did you tell him that you were a Hiroshima Japanese, though?

KM: No, I didn't tell him that time.

(Laughter)

KM: Johnny Wilson. Did you know that he was President Herbert Hoover's classmate?

MK: Really?

KM: Yeah, he told me he was a classmate, the first class out of Stanford Engineering School [in 1895].

MK: Oh.

KM: Herbert Hoover, ex-president Herbert Hoover's classmate.

MK: Hmm. Uh huh.

KM: Johnny Wilson was a real common man. He was for the common people. One of his last elections, I remember talking to him in his office—and his office was always open. He said, "Miho, come in, come in, I want to talk to you." I went in there and he says, "Sit down." I sat down and, "Well, you know, this election, Akana, my driver," he had a loyal driver named [Akong] Akana, "Akana says this election, I must run for the last time, *make* all right. Run for mayor. What do you think?"

"Oh," I said, "anytime, you run, you'll win."

He said, "I'm old now, eighty-something."

"Oh, I think you'll win, though."

And his opponent was Mayor [Lester] Petrie, no, was Charlie Crane, I think. Ex-*Advertiser* editor, Charlie Crane. [If KM is referring to Wilson's last election, he ran against Neal Blaisdell in 1952.] And he said, "Miho, Akana says no run. What do you think?"

I say, "You take Akana and go down Kalihi side, one road down the other side, go down around, make a round like you always do. Talk to the people. Talk to the people, after all, they're going to vote. And then come this side, go down Kāhala side. Talk to the people."

"That's exactly what I'm going to do. So you come with me."

"No, no, no. Japanese go with, no good. Too many Hawaiian over there, Kalihi side."

"Oh, yeah, that's right, that's right, I forgot. Mō'ili'ili side you come with me."

"All right."

And so he went around, spent a week going to listen to the people, talking to the people. And then his secretary, Miss Beamer, I forgot her first name. I think she's still living. Beamer, golf champion. What was her name, Annie Beamer? No. She was the sister of one of the supervisors, Beamer, Beamer, Beamer, Milton Beamer. Anyway, couple days later he called me and Miss Beamer called me so I went in and he said, "Miho, sit down." I sit down. He said, "You know, you were right, you know. You *pololei*, though."

I said, "What do you mean, right?"

"You know you told me the other day go talk to the people and then decide what to do?"

"Yeah. You took Akana with you?"

"Oh, yeah, sure."

"Did you wear that suit that I gave you?"

"No, no, no, no. I"—Beamer, what's her name, anyway—"she tell me wear the old one, the

one get hole inside the sleeve. Yeah, of course, when you go Kalihi, you no can *ho'okano*." *Ho'okano* means, you know, to dress up. "Oh yeah, when you go Kalihi side, you no can go *ho'okano*. *Hoi polloi* there."

"So what happened?"

"Well, after I go around, Akana and me, people say he make paper. This 90 percent, this 10 percent. Ninety percent I win, 10 percent I lose. Ninety percent people say, people say I run for mayor again, I win, 90 percent. So I going run now. You're going to help?"

I says, "No, I no can help, active as campaign manager, but Miyamoto is there," and there was a Chinese—I forgot his name—Shim, Shim, I think. [Per Katsugo Miho, KM may have been thinking of a person named "Ching."] There was a Chinese—"they are all in there again."

"Okay, you call 'em up, tell 'em I'm ready to run."

And that's how he run the last election. He went to talk to the people. Simple as that. What the people want, they get. If people say no, no.

WN: Thank you very much.

MK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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